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A Formula That Will Work Wonders for You

REMEMBER THAT OTHER PEOPLE MAY BE TOTALLY WRONG. BUT THEY don't think so. Don't condemn them. Any fool can do that. Try to understand them. Only wise, tolerant, exceptional people even try to do that.

There is a reason why the other man thinks and acts as he does. Ferret out that reason—and you have the key to his actions, perhaps to his personality.

Try honestly to put yourself in his place.

If you say to yourself, "How would I feel, how would I react if I were in his shoes?" you will save yourself time and irritation, for "by becoming interested in the cause, we are less likely to dislike the effect." And, in addition, you will sharply increase your skill in human relationships.

"Stop a minute," says Kenneth M. Goode in his book *How to Turn People Into Gold*, "stop a minute to contrast your keen interest in your own affairs with your mild concern about anything else. Realize then, that everybody else in the world feels exactly the same way! Then, along with Lincoln and Roosevelt, you will have grasped the only solid foundation for interpersonal relation-

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ships; namely, that success in dealing with people depends on a sympathetic grasp of the other person's viewpoint."

Sam Douglas of Hempstead, New York, used to tell his wife that she spent too much time working on their lawn, pulling weeds, fertilizing, cutting the grass twice a week when the lawn didn't look any better than it had when they moved into their home four years earlier. Naturally, she was distressed by his remarks, and each time he made such remarks the balance of the evening was ruined.

After taking our course, Mr. Douglas realized how foolish he had been all those years. It never occurred to him that she enjoyed doing that work and she might really appreciate a compliment on her diligence.

One evening after dinner, his wife said she wanted to pull some weeds and invited him to keep her company. He first declined, but then thought better of it and went out after her and began to help her pull weeds. She was visibly pleased, and together they spent an hour in hard work and pleasant conversation.

After that he often helped her with the gardening and complimented her on how fine the lawn looked, what a fantastic job she was doing with a yard where the soil was like concrete. Result: a happier life for both because he had learned to look at things from her point of view—even if the subject was only weeds.

In his book *Getting Through to People*, Dr. Gerald S. Nirenberg commented: "Cooperativeness in conversation is achieved when you show that you consider the other person's ideas and feelings as important as your own. Starting your conversation by giving the other person the purpose or direction of your conversation, governing what you say by what you would want to hear if you were the listener, and accepting his or her viewpoint will encourage the listener to have an open mind to your ideas."^{*}

^{*}Dr. Gerald S. Nirenberg, *Getting Through to People* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 31.

How to Win People to Your Way of Thinking

I have always enjoyed walking and riding in a park near my home. Like the Druids of ancient Gaul, I all but worship an oak tree, so I was distressed season after season to see the young trees and shrubs killed off by needless fires. These fires weren't caused by careless smokers. They were almost all caused by youngsters who went out to the park to go native and cook a frankfurter or an egg under the trees. Sometimes, these fires raged so fiercely that the fire department had to be called out to fight the conflagration.

There was a sign on the edge of the park saying that anyone who started a fire was liable to fine and imprisonment, but the sign stood in an unfrequented part of the park, and few of the culprits ever saw it. A mounted policeman was supposed to look after the park; but he didn't take his duties too seriously, and the fires continued to spread season after season. On one occasion, I rushed up to a policeman and told him about a fire spreading rapidly through the park and wanted him to notify the fire department, and he nonchalantly replied that it was none of his business because it wasn't in his precinct! I was desperate, so after that when I went riding, I acted as a self-appointed committee of one to protect the public domain. In the beginning, I am afraid I didn't even attempt to see the other people's point of view. When I saw a fire blazing under the trees, I was so unhappy about it, so eager to do the right thing, that I did the wrong thing. I would ride up to the boys, warn them that they could be jailed for starting a fire, order with a tone of authority that it be put out; and, if they refused, I would threaten to have them arrested. I was merely unloading my feelings without thinking of their point of view.

The result? They obeyed—obeyed sullenly and with resentment. After I rode on over the hill, they probably rebuilt the fire and longed to burn up the whole park.

With the passing of the years, I acquired a trifle more knowledge of human relations, a little more tact, a somewhat greater tendency to see things from the other person's standpoint. Then,

instead of giving orders, I would ride up to a blazing fire and begin something like this:

"Having a good time, boys? What are you going to cook for supper? . . . I loved to build fires *myself* when I was a boy—and I still love to. But you know they are very dangerous here in the park. I know you boys don't mean to do any harm, but other boys aren't so careful. They come along and see that you have built a fire; so they build one and don't put it out when they go home and it spreads among the dry leaves and kills the trees. We won't have any trees here at all if we aren't more careful. You could be put in jail for building this fire. But I don't want to be bossy and interfere with your pleasure. I like to see you enjoy yourselves; but won't you please rake all the leaves away from the fire right now—and you'll be careful to cover it with dirt, a lot of dirt, before you leave, won't you? And the next time you want to have some fun, won't you please build your fire over the hill there in the sandpit? It can't do any harm there. . . . Thanks so much, boys. Have a good time."

What a difference that kind of talk made! It made the boys want to cooperate. No sullenness, no resentment. They hadn't been forced to obey orders. They had saved their faces. They felt better and I felt better because I had handled the situation with consideration for their point of view.

Seeing things through another person's eyes may ease tensions when personal problems become overwhelming. Elizabeth Novak of New South Wales, Australia, was six weeks late with her car payment. "On a Friday," she reported, "I received a nasty phone call from the man who was handling my account informing me if I did not come up with \$122 by Monday morning I could anticipate further action from the company. I had no way of raising the money over the weekend, so when I received his phone call first thing on Monday morning I expected the worst. Instead of becoming upset I looked at the situation from his point of view. I apologized most sincerely for

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causing him so much inconvenience and remarked that I must be his most troublesome customer as this was not the first time I was behind in my payments. His tone of voice changed immediately, and he reassured me that I was far from being one of his really troublesome customers. He went on to tell me several examples of how rude his customers sometimes were, how they lied to him and often tried to avoid talking to him at all. I said nothing. I listened and let him pour out his troubles to me. Then, without any suggestion from me, he said it did not matter if I couldn't pay all the money immediately. It would be all right if I paid him \$20 by the end of the month and made up the balance whenever it was convenient for me to do so."

Tomorrow, before asking anyone to put out a fire or buy your product or contribute to your favorite charity, why not pause and close your eyes and try to think the whole thing through from another person's point of view? Ask yourself: "Why should he or she want to do it?" True, this will take time, but it will avoid making enemies and will get better results—and with less friction and less shoe leather.

"I would rather walk the sidewalk in front of a person's office for two hours before an interview," said Dean Donham of the Harvard Business School, "than step into that office without a perfectly clear idea of what I was going to say and what that person—from my knowledge of his or her interests and motives—was likely to answer."

That is so important that I am going to repeat it in italics for the sake of emphasis.

I would rather walk the sidewalk in front of a person's office for two hours before an interview than step into that office without a perfectly clear idea of what I was going to say and what that person—from my knowledge of his or her interests and motives—was likely to answer.

If, as a result of reading this book, you get only one thing—an increased tendency to think always in terms of the other

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person's point of view, and see things from that person's angle as well as your own—if you get only that one thing from this book, it may easily prove to be one of the stepping-stones of your career.

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PRINCIPLE 8

Try honestly to see things from the other person's point of view.

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